

## BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Kazukiyo "Jiggs" Kuboyama

*"I think I was thirteen when I first started working for the plantation. We were young, so they used to tell us, 'You work for the dairy. Truck will be waiting over here for you folks. Ride this truck and they'll take you to your working area.' At times, we used to go out and pick kiawe beans. We used to go out way on the far end before you got to Wailuku . . . There, they used to give us a bag and we used to get a box, fill up the box [with kiawe beans] and put it into the bag. They used to pay us by the pound. They paid us nine tenths of a cent, not one cent, nine tenths of a cent per pound."*

Kazukiyo "Jiggs" Kuboyama was born in 1929 in Lahaina, Maui. The son of Kakuji and Masuyo Kuboyama, he and his four sisters and two brothers grew up in Kelaweia Camp. He attended King Kamehameha III School, and graduated from Lahainaluna School in 1947.

From the age of thirteen, Kuboyama worked for the plantation performing various jobs including picking *kiawe* beans and working in the plantation dairy. After high school, he worked as a welder's helper and after a year and a half, became a carpenter for the plantation. He then served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War. He briefly returned to his old job at Pioneer Mill before attending college at Stout Institute in Wisconsin on a GI Bill.

When he returned to Hawai'i four years later, he taught at Wai'anae High School on O'ahu, where he developed an interest in teaching *'ukulele* making. He then taught at Kalani High School, and finally at Honolulu Community College. He retired in 1992.

He currently lives in Honolulu with his wife, Mae. They have four children.

Tape No. 39-2-1-02

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Kazukiyo "Jiggs" Kuboyama (JK)

Honolulu, O'ahu

July 9, 2002

BY: Holly Yamada (HY)

HY: This is an interview with [Kazukiyo] "Jiggs" Kuboyama. It's July 9, 2002. The interviewer is Holly Yamada and we're outside his home in Honolulu.

Let's start with, what's your birth [year]?

JK: My birth [year] is 1929.

HY: And where were you born?

JK: I was born in Lahaina, Maui. Born and raised.

HY: Before we get into your childhood, maybe we can talk about what you know about your parents' background. Your father [Kakuji Kuboyama] came to Hawai'i, yeah?

JK: My parents came to Hawai'i from Hiroshima. My father came here first. He was sixteen years old and started working for the plantation. Must be HC & S [Hawaiian Commercial & Sugar Company]. It was in Sprecklesville that we first lived in. And later on, when he got to be about twenty-one, got married to my mother [Masuyo Kaneyama]. There were ten of us, but then three died, and the seven of us remained. Had four sisters, and there were three boys.

HY: Did you know your father's parents, your grandparents?

JK: No, I did not. But, I met some of my mother's brothers in Japan when I was stationed in Japan during the Korean War. I got to meet them in Hiroshima.

HY: You said they were both from Hiroshima. Did they know each other prior to getting married or was she a picture bride?

JK: Yes. I think they knew each other because my dad and mom came from the same village, not too far from each other. So I guess they knew each other.

HY: Your father started out working in Sprecklesville and then moved to Lahaina at some point, do you know why that happened?

JK: He worked for the plantation and then after a while he worked in the carpentry department, and the boss there showed him quite a bit about carpentry. And when he

learned enough, he became a contractor and that's how he moved to Lahaina. He became a contractor based in Lahaina when the [Great] Depression hit him. He had to go back and work for the Pioneer Mill plantation because of the depression.

HY: So the depression affected that type of work [i.e. construction work]. You mentioned something previously about the precasting, why that was more important after the depression.

JK: Yeah, the precast was after he worked for the plantation. Initially when he became a contractor, he bought a lot of tools and that's when the depression came. It made it hard because jobs were scarce and he had to pay back what he borrowed and everything. So, he talked to his friends about what he should do, and many of them advised him better close up because no sense go more in debt. He gave up that and went back to the plantation to work.

HY: Do your memories start then, from Lahaina? You don't remember?

JK: I don't remember anything when we lived in Sprecklesville because (I wasn't born yet). All I know about is Lahaina.

HY: Tell me where you lived when you lived in Lahaina. I understand you were in the camps.

JK: Initially we were living right above the prison. Then after the business went bad he had to sell our place and we moved to Kelaweia.

HY: That's Kelaweia Camp.

JK: Yeah. So, as far as I know, more or less we grew up at Kelaweia Camp.

HY: And Kelaweia Camp now, is that the . . . .

JK: . . . above the mill.

HY: . . . the mill. That's where the smokestacks are. Above there.

JK: Yeah. It's the last camp before Lahainaluna [School]. It's one of the best places on the island.

HY: (Chuckles) and at what age did you move to that camp? How old were you?

JK: I would say about, maybe six or seven. I vaguely recollect that old house we used to stay in before we moved to Kelaweia.

HY: Can you describe for me your camp house, the Kelaweia Camp house?

JK: The Kelaweia Camp house had, let's see, one, two, three bedrooms. And we had a living room, we had a porch, and a long narrow kitchen in the back. At that time, we had no bathroom. We had a public bath where we all went. Even the toilet was a public toilet. So basically your home was just to eat and sleep there.

HY: The bathroom facilities were they used by the entire camp?

JK: The entire camp, but they had so many different places. They had a unique system—what do you call?—plumbing system. What they did was, they dug the pipeline going right down the center of the village and then they came down so the toilets were more like in line. One here, there, and the line where the pipe was going. And each pipe ended up [in the] ditch.

HY: Do you need to . . . Okay, we'll stop the tape.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

HY: Okay, you're talking about the plumbing system at the camp.

JK: See, what they had was just like the system that you have right now. They have this water closet on the top and they have a floater so when the water comes up to a certain level, it flushes. This one here is automatically controlled by the floater, and as the tank fills up, then it'll flush. You don't have to flush [it] yourself, it's continuous. So all you do if you use it, you sit on it, do what you have to do and that's it. The water automatically will flush and it goes down into the irrigation ditch. And then, all the waste is used as fertilizer on the field. They had a unique system (chuckles).

The bathhouse is combined, whereby you had a partition, one side is women one side is men. They had this huge burner on the bottom. They used firewood and that heated up [the bath water]. And then after the '46 strike that they had, gradually the plantation started selling all their property and then they started installing the regular plumbing, close to the regular plumbing set up. Then each home had their own shower or bath. We began to change after they started selling all the plantation homes.

HY: About how many families would you say use one bathhouse?

JK: (The whole camp used one bathhouse.)

HY: Was Kelaweia Camp one of the larger camps, Pioneer Mill. Or an average-size camp?

JK: No. It wasn't that large. I think, Kuhua [Camp] right above the mill was larger than Kelaweia. It wasn't that large an area.

HY: What about the ethnic makeup of your camp?

JK: Our camp primarily when we were there, I would say 75 percent were Japanese. Then you had different nationalities the other 25 percent. Basically, it was a lot of Oriental families.

HY: Now, you had your own cooking facilities.

JK: Yeah, each one had their own kitchen.

HY: Maybe you could talk a little bit about the kinds of foods you ate growing up.

JK: Well, when we were growing up, the type of food was basically similar to what you would call wok cooking. What they would do is, basically, a little meat with a lot of vegetables. Those days, meat might have been expensive, but basically they use a little for the taste and then they use lot of vegetables because they grew their own vegetables.



- HY: Now, did your own family grow vegetables for yourself or was there a community [garden]?
- JK: (Each family) grew whatever they wanted. Everything grows so fast, then pretty soon you get more than what you need then you give to the neighbors. Everybody share. That's one of the things that we kind of lose, that old friendly type thing. When we were kids, you never did lock your door. You just left it open, went wherever. Whenever you had things, everybody shared, and when you needed help, everybody went there to help. We were fortunate that we grew up in the right time.
- HY: Did your mother do work for the plantation as well or was she at home raising kids?
- JK: She raised the kids until we were old (enough to go to school), and then she did work for the plantation.
- HY: What type of work did she do?
- JK: Sometimes on the railroad track where the cane came from and some would drop off, they would pick up the cane [that had dropped] and put it back. And also, at times they did weeding. At times, they used to cut the cane to a certain length to be replanted again. So they did that type of thing. But it wasn't that heavy type of work.
- HY: Your father, you mentioned, did precasting. Maybe you can talk about actually what that was.
- JK: Precast. See, the irrigation ditch where the water comes down, you transfer water to the field. In the field, they have irrigation pipes that they have from the main [pipe] go into this irrigation. It's made out of concrete, so certain parts they have to make the concrete mold. Okay, now the water goes in here. We want to get it to the field. How do you do it? They make different kinds of pipes, different shapes and sizes. Precast is the place where they lay it out and everything so that they make the mold so that you can make this pipe. They were doing that type of work.
- HY: Did he continue doing that throughout his career there or did he change?
- JK: Until he retired he stayed in that department. Because in the plantation, once you get into [a job], you hardly move. They feel that you're more important there than another place. They keep you wherever you [are]. I guess when you're young you might want to shift here and there, but as you get older once you are assigned to a certain place you're contented with what you doing and you don't want to move because things are the same more or less day in and day out.
- HY: Now, before you started working yourself with the plantation, did you have household duties you were supposed to do or any other kind of work that you did?
- JK: My job was basically inside the house, sweeping, mopping, doing that type of work, while my younger brother was taking care of the yard work outside, watering. Each of us had our chores so before we went to school we did all our chores.

And those days, this was during the forties, once the Second World War [started], we had gas ration. So basically, the girls were allowed to ride the bus because they had only so many buses. The girls were allowed to ride the bus, and all the menfolk were supposed to walk to school. You didn't have car or anything, so most of us walked to school.

HY: You were going to school at . . .

JK: Lahainaluna High School.

HY: Before that you went to [King] Kamehameha [III School].

JK: Kamehameha III School. The elementary school ran from first grade up to eighth grade and high school was from nine to twelve. We didn't have any middle school. Everything was just elementary and high school.

HY: Do you remember if you folks grumbled about having to walk when the girls got to ride?

JK: No, we took it for granted that's how it should be. We didn't complain at all.

HY: Well, back to your household duties and chores and things like that. Were there any other things that you had to do?

JK: No. Basically, if there were [additional chores], like at times my mom used to take care the chicken, and if she needed a new chicken coop, then my dad will tell us [how to build one].

HY: So you folks raised your own chickens?

JK: Yeah, and ducks.

HY: Was this for egg-laying chickens, or for meat, or for both?

JK: For both. In our days, to go to the market to buy chicken, that was something you don't think of. When you want chicken, you just go in the backyard and get one chicken and that's it.

HY: And what about fish?

JK: We used to go to market or when the neighbors went fishing, they might have a huge catch, then what they used to do is send some to Honolulu and other times they used to come around to our camp and they used to sell them. *Akule* was selling for ten cents a pound. They caught so many. They used to come around, sell it for ten cents a pound. Today when you look at it, you go, gee.

HY: Oh, yeah.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

HY: Okay, so you're talking about food and fish, and I'm wondering what kind of vegetables you folks grew.

JK: We had head cabbage, Chinese cabbage, tomatoes, green onions, (Lahaina eggplant) and at times some people raised round onions. Lettuce was popular. Fruit like bananas, avocados, mangoes.

HY: What about dairy? Was there a dairy?

JK: There was, but the dairy was run by the plantation. We used to get the milk from the plantation. They used to deliver the milk.

HY: What sorts of things would you buy at the plantation store then?

JK: The plantation store basically carried canned meats, fresh meat (and staples). At times when you don't have enough chicken, you buy your chicken or the meat there.

HY: Rice.

JK: Rice and chorizo.

HY: Chorizo?

JK: Just like sausage, but it's really firm and hot and high in cholesterol. Those days, you never [thought about cholesterol]. And the good part about it is when you cook it, then you take out most of the oil. Then it last long. When you had to go to a picnic, you need lunch for school and you take an excursion, then we used to have rice with the chorizo. The Spam *musubi* was the days when we were in scouting. It was simple. We would have Spam and eggs for breakfast. Maybe for lunch we might make Spam with something or use corned beef. Those were the basic things as far as scouting was concerned. Whatever we ate were those kinds of products. Today many times they use lots of tuna, but our time, tuna spoiled so we didn't use too much tuna. Basically, was Spam, chorizo, with something that would last.

HY: You didn't have refrigeration?

JK: No. We used to have icebox. The ice people used to come and deliver. I think it was every day or every other day, I forgot. But they used to bring it to your house, so in those days everything was in the icebox.

HY: They would bring you a block of ice?

JK: Yep, to fit right in there. It lasted (for almost two days). The preservatives or whatever they used in those days really lasts. Like the ham, they didn't put it in the refrigerator. They hang it up and that's it. Whenever you wanted, you bring it down, you just cut the slice, and then hang it back again. It was real simple.

After the war, more people start getting refrigerators. Once you start getting refrigerators, they cut out the icebox.

HY: What about recreation when you were a kid?

JK: Recreation, what we did was, we could either go down the beach, or at home we played different kinds of games. We had organized sports like basketball, baseball, softball, volleyball. The plantation used to have one person, like an athletic director, who set up the schedule. It was really nice, the plantation used to do that.

HY: Would you play camps within the Pioneer Mill?

JK: Yeah. And then, Maui County used to have a football league and they played against maybe Wailuku or Pu'unēnē or some other place. Lahaina had one team, and they used to compete. In football, they used to have hundred-five-pound league, they used to have

hundred-twenty pound, and different kinds of leagues that they used to have in basketball or whatever. We used to have Lahaina group, all the camps, and then we had the Maui County [leagues].

As far as in between [the times there were league games], we made our own games. What it is, basically, it's hide-and-seek, but we used to call it bang *make*. Bang *make*, in other words, when you shoot something, you say, "Bang!" and then you dead. *Make* means dead. We used to call it bang *make* and what we used to do, we'd split up in teams and hide. The fun part is we played at night when hard to see. You have to hide, within the given boundary. And what we do is go around looking for the people. Then you say, "Bang *make!* you dead," and this person is out of the game until the game is over and then we play again.

Then we used to have rubber gun. We used to have the inner tube of the tire and we used to make a gun, a round barrel made out of wood with a wooden handle. And in that, we cut a slot so that you can put your inner tube in when you stretch it. And then what we used to do with that, we could make it to shoot just by itself. Maybe you might have about eight slots. You have eight, and then you just pull it up one time and it fly. So when you see the person you have to know how far the rubbers can fly because it has to touch the person. If not, the person is not out. If you miss, the guy can come back get you, so you have to watch. And then, at times, we put a string running right through. We used to call it machine gun. So when you lift up the string, if you had eight all the eight would go.

(Laughter)

JK: But if you use all eight, then you out of shots. The other person can get you, so you have to be careful about how you play.

When it was basketball season we spent a lot of time in the basketball court. The plantation would set up different areas. We were fortunate. We had a clubhouse and we had a basketball court. So, when basketball season, most of the time we'd be down there, playing among ourselves, practicing to get better. And if it's softball season, then we go down to the park and play softball. Basically, we had lot of clean fun. At times, if you wanted to go swimming, you go swimming or diving. Fishing was pretty popular, too.

HY: Did you stay pretty much in Lahaina or when you were a kid did you venture out beyond those boundaries?

JK: When you young, you stick around near Lahaina. Then, as you get to high school, since the bus didn't cost you that much to get to Wailuku, we'd go there. Wailuku in those days, [S.H.] Kress [& Company] used to be very popular. Kress used to hire a lot of these young girls, so the menfolk used to flock over there just to see. That's how when they were in high school, they used to spend their time there. It was interesting because that's where you meet girls from different schools. I know the boys used to come to Lahaina to go diving and everything so they could meet the Lahaina girls. Whereas, the Lahaina boys used to go to Wailuku. In those days, (if you went to the movies it would be with a group). When the theater gets dark, then you start seeing all the moving going on. The girls would be sitting down next to an empty seat, and then after the lights go off and the movie starts, then the boys come sit down right next to them. Then before the movie is over, they'll get out. You don't want to be caught with a girl. Those days, they kind of

frowned on it. Eh, you girl crazy or something like that. So most of the time, they used to hide. It was real different from today.

HY: What were the theaters there when you were growing up?

JK: There were two theaters. One was Pioneer Theater and the other one was Queen Theatre.

HY: Was Pioneer Theater part of the plantation?

JK: No, no. Both of them were different, nothing to do with the plantation. In fact, that had one Nippon Theatre that used to show Japanese movies. So, in all there were three theaters.

HY: Let me ask you about language. Was Japanese your first language?

JK: No. Basically, we spoke mostly English, but in between because my parents were from Japan, we learned both. In Hawai'i, in our time, even the Japanese spoke a mixture of different languages. You might think it's Japanese, but it's not. It's a mixture of Hawaiian, maybe Chinese, could be English or whatever. It's a mixture. That's where the pidgin came from.

I took my mom and dad to Expo '70 in Japan. They hadn't been to Japan in a long time. When my dad took my cousin's children out for a walk, instead of asking them, "Let's go for a walk," in Japanese he said, "Come come, lets go *holoholo*." *Holoholo* is Hawaiian, so they didn't know what he was saying. He grabbed their hands, started going out, then they understand. And then, at times when we were ready to eat, he'd say, "Oh, *kaukau* time." My cousins would laugh; they didn't know what he was saying. "Let's eat, it's *kaukau* time." Things like that, was interesting for me because they'd been away from Japan for so long and here they thought they were speaking Japanese but it was all a mixture. Until you hear somebody say that you don't know it's not Japanese, but it's something else. So, it was real interesting to take them at that time. I had a good laugh too.

HY: Did you go to Japanese-language school when you were growing up?

JK: Yeah. As I grew up, I did go to Japanese-language school, but the problem with that was that the Japanese school was next to the ballpark, so naturally, when people say, "Let's play ball," instead of school, we played ball. In our times, what happened was, when we went to the ball field and we didn't go to school, then the girls would report to the teacher that we were out there playing ball. So next time when we went to class we had to stay after school. Then we'd find out who said that we were playing ball and then we kind of threaten the person, saying, "Next time you say it, we're going to beat you up."

So, I went to school, and I picked up not that much. I wasn't that conscientious or anything, I just went to school because we had to. My parents would say, "You have to go to Japanese school." And partly too, I was taking judo and this was a part of the Japanese school. So, the teacher would tell us, "Make sure you go to school." So we all went to school because he wanted to make sure that we knew Japanese.

HY: You're saying that your judo training was part of the Japanese school?

JK: Well actually, the Japanese school was part of the Buddhist church, and the Buddhist ministers were the judo teachers. They used to teach us, so they wanted us to go through



the Japanese school and also go to church. But then, when the war came, they were all interned. So we didn't have anything. So even our judo we tried to kind of have it, but eventually it died out.

HY: Do you remember your minister?

JK: Yeah.

HY: Do you remember his name?

JK: His name was Kami, we used to call him Kami *sensei*. He was our judo instructor and he was really strict. The training they have today—no comparison. Anything you do, judo practice was first. We had one incident, whereby one of the boys played football and he didn't come to practice for a couple of days. So then, when he came to practice, he had to sit in front of the teacher and the teacher will ask him which is more important, judo or football? So the guy answered, "Football."

Then the teacher went just slap him and okay, "Judo or football?"

He'd say, "Football."

[The teacher would] slap him again. And then the third time he asked him, "Judo or football, which is more important?"

He said, "Judo."

"Okay, go wash up." That's how strict it was.

If we went into a tournament, if you tie yourself it's all right, but you cannot lose. If you lose your match, then when you come back the next time, they're going to just pound you, bounce you left and right. You either tie or you don't lose. That's how strict.

HY: Who were the competitors in the tournaments?

JK: Different churches from the different areas. Wailuku had some, and Pu'unēnē or Kahalu'u.

HY: I'm assuming they trained the boys. Girls did not, or did they?

JK: At that time, girls hardly came.

HY: Were they allowed to?

JK: They were allowed to, but in those days for girls to take judo, they kind of frown on. After the war, gradually girls start coming. More or less, girls were supposed to stay at home and take care (of the housework). At that time, it was Japanese custom. That's how we grew up (chuckles).

HY: What was the name of the church?

JK: This was the Lahaina Hongwanji church.

HY: Let's talk about your schooling, you first went to Kamehameha III. Do you remember much about your elementary school days?

JK: Elementary school days were—more or less the teachers knew who you were because this is a small community so you get to know. My brother liked to play sports, so people knew him, especially the male teachers. "If you don't study hard, I'm going to tell your brother." If they were to tell my brother that I was goofing off or something, then I'll get hell from my brother. He'll beat me up because that's how it was, the custom. When you go to school you supposed to study. So more or less when the teacher threaten you like that, you have to study, especially for that instructor. The female instructors were pretty good. They didn't threaten you or anything.

HY: Who were your teachers? Were they people from outside [Lahaina]?

JK: Mostly, the ones we had at that time were people living in Lahaina for some time. They didn't move like today, once they start. And then they stay for a while. So, I would say that 95 percent were living in Lahaina when they were teaching, married to somebody in Lahaina. There were a few. And those days, used to have teachers' cottage, so many of them stayed in teachers' cottage. They'd stay at least three years or so. We got to know the teachers and their family, too. I was fortunate that I had pretty good teachers.

HY: What about the ethnicity of your teachers?

JK: I would say maybe one fourth was Hawaiian, maybe another fourth would be Caucasian, and then Orientals you might have another about 50 percent. In those days, many of them went to [Territorial] Normal [and Training] School and then came to teach.

HY: How did you get to school? Did you take the bus there?

JK: No, we used to walk.

HY: You used to walk.

JK: When I got my bicycle, I started using the bicycle wherever I wanted to go.

HY: I know you had said that the boys would walk and the girls would take the bus after the war started, but you folks walked before too?

JK: Yeah. We used to walk to elementary school. You leave little earlier, but it was nice.

HY: I'm going to stop the tape here and turn it over.

END OF SIDE ONE

## SIDE TWO

HY: Okay we were talking about your elementary school days, and you walked to school. You did your chores first and then you walked to school.

JK: I think the elementary school did a pretty good job, but the thing I liked most was the high school. Lahainaluna [School] was the only school where a person could get a high



school diploma and certificate in vocational education. The reason is that Lahainaluna, I think, was the only school that catered to more vocational education. They had programs that were suited for those who wanted to go to college, they had programs for those who wanted to go into business ed, they had programs for those who wanted to go into construction, and there were programs for agriculture. In my case, I took the one going into construction.

The way it was set up is that when you enter in the freshman year, you sign up for this pre-vocational school program. You have to spend three months or one third of the time in carpentry, one third of the time in the machine shop, and one third of the time in automotive. Before you get through with that, if you're interested in becoming an auto-mechanic or machinist or a carpenter, the instructor will select who he feels has the best potential. Then if they have room for maybe six, then only six will be selected to continue on. If you were chosen to get into any one of the programs, you spend three periods in academic courses and then [up to] the next six periods in your vocational area. If you wanted to take any other kind of courses that conflicted with your sixth period, then you had to have approval from your instructor. In a sense, it was good because it gave us the opportunity while we're growing up. So when you came to eighth grade you know that next year you're going into the pre-vocational, then you have to get a feel of it. This way, it kind of helps the individual. [If] you want to go into business, it's available to you. If you try taking a business course and you find out you don't like it, then you can always change. So before you graduate, you can change. At least you get a feel of what you want to take.

Today, they don't have something like that. If they can have something like this set up, so that you train the students when they come to the ninth grade they have to decide what kind of courses they want, it will help them look more or less what to become in their life. Because I think too many times, because they don't have any kind of program, today the students who graduate from high school don't know what they want. Even if they go to college they don't know what they want. So if they have that from the ninth grade year, let them see. If they have something like this it would be a big help.

The classes I went through, it really helped me because after I graduated from Lahainaluna I went into (tape inaudible) because they didn't have an opening. But then, I did some other type of work. Then I went into carpentry and it was a big help because we learned a lot of things ahead of time. It was a big help.

HY: How did you decide on carpentry? How did that come about?

JK: My dad was in carpentry and he used to tell me do a lot of things. So he showed me how to sharpen the saw, how to sharpen the tools and everything. So basically, I got involved. When I was going to Sunday school and things like that, where people were doing repair work or renovating, on my own time, I would go and help them so I can learn. I was really involved in it. If I need something, I used to build it myself. So gradually, I picked it up and it really helped me. Even before that when I was young, if I need a basketball court, I'd go get lumber and I'd make my own basketball court. I'll just go ahead and build it.

My dad scolded me one time, "If you want to learn how to use the tool, first of all, you have to learn how to sharpen the tool." I used his good plane. I didn't know which was a good plane or bad a plane, so I just saw that in the toolbox, picked it up, and used his best plane to plane something which you don't use. I really ruined his good plane. Then he

told me, "If you want to learn, I'll show you." So he taught me how to sharpen plane, so every day after class I had to come back and sharpen the plane until he was satisfied. And then he told me, "Give me one old saw." I had to sharpen the saw until he was satisfied. That's how I developed my skill. He was really strict. Everything has to be just so.

HY: Did he do carpentry work for the plantation as well?

JK: Yeah.

HY: This was included in his precasting job?

JK: Yeah, they became one group under carpentry. They all kind of came together. When they needed help in a certain area, they'd go out and do some work. But basically they did precasting. We had a repair crew, carpentry-repair crew. They used to take care [of repairs] if there was a storm or anything were to happen.

HY: We talked real briefly about the war, you were about eighth grade during the war. How old were you?

JK: I was in elementary school. When the war broke out, we had one old wharf that extended out where the interisland ships used to come in. On that day, that Sunday, I went to the wharf to do some fishing, but when we went out to the wharf, they told us, "Hey, you better go home."

"Why? I came for fishing."

"No, nobody can fish over here." We decided we better go home. When we went home, we listened to the radio. They said that Pearl Harbor was bombed. Because of the blackout, our house and everything, all the windows, we had to paint all black or put a covering on. That's how it was.

At that time too, with the war effort and everything, we used to form these victory gardens. They used to call us "victory workers." I think I was thirteen when I first started working for the plantation. We were young, so they used to tell us, "You work for the dairy. The truck will be waiting over here for you folks. Ride this truck and they'll take you to your working area." At times, we used to go out and pick *kiawe* beans. We used to go out way on the far end before you got to Wailuku, the Pali, just before that area, they used to have a lot of *kiawe* trees. There, they used to give us a bag and we used to get a box, fill up the box [with *kiawe* beans] and put it into the bag. They used to pay us by the pound. They paid us nine tenths of a cent, not one cent, nine tenths of a cent per pound. When you bring your bag in, they weigh it. They say, "This weighs so much, this is how much you get." And at the end of the day they tell you you had so many pounds and you multiply it by 0.9 and this what you make. That's how it was.

Then, where they [i.e. the plantation] used to raise cattle, sometimes they used to let [the cattle] go in the valley to graze. The *koa* trees used to grow too high. The cattle cannot reach up there, so they used to have us cut all the *koa* low so that the new shoot could come up and the cattle can eat them. And at times, we used to go out in the field and do weeding. They used to have a stick that was about thirty feet long. That one length, they used to call that one line. Or was it—maybe it was ten feet, I think. Then three times, that's one line, thirty feet. What they do is, count how many lines in one row, from one end to the other end, and then they might say, "When you finish one it's about six lines." So you know how long it is, so you just go ahead. They paid you per line. If there were a

lot of grass then they might [pay] ten cents a line. And then if it was only little bit [i.e. not a lot of grass in the line], then they might say, five cents, four cents, three cents, whatever. That's how you worked. How many lines or how fast you work all depended on you. You go by how many lines you made that day and multiplied by [the rate per line]. If you made about two dollars, you were top dog already. That's it. In those days, most people made about ninety cents. Girls used to come out and work, too. Many of them, after a while, they can't take it so they quit. We worked four days a week and the fifth day was out in the field. We went to school Monday through Thursday, and then Friday, if you didn't go to school, you out in the field doing the work. So we worked Friday and Saturday for the plantation.

HY: What did you do with your earnings? Did you keep it for yourself? Did you give it to your family?

JK: I gave mine all to my family. Whenever we needed money, we just go ask. We were fortunate because I had understanding parents.

HY: So you were a victory worker for the plantation all through the war.

JK: Yeah, even after I graduated. One summer I worked for the pineapple company working in the cannery as a tray boy. It was fun just to get a different experience. The girls select [pineapple] and they put it in these cans. And then when it's filled, you take the tray and give them an empty one. At times, some of the girls get sassy. Then the tray boys, what we used to do was—[when a girl's tray was all] filled up she wouldn't know what to do, so she would put it in the front of her [and the pineapple she was supposed to select gets backed up]. Anytime when there's pineapple [accumulated] in the front it shows that you're slow or you not doing it right. So we looked at the forelady, and we took out the full one and put in the empty one. [So the girl is caught with too much pineapple backed up even though there are empty trays.] (Laughs) When the forelady sees, she scolds, "How come you so slow? Catch up!" We used to do that, so much fun. The girls used to respect the tray boys because we can do a lot of things. The forelady didn't know because [if] we don't take the full tray, [the girls selecting and packing] can't do anything. So when we take away [a full tray] and give her an empty one, she can be fast. We used to have so much fun (chuckles). Now, when you think back, we used to do things like that. I guess, when you're young.

HY: Rascal.

You mentioned the effects of the war on your church, I'm wondering also about the plantation, how it changed your life there. You mentioned the blackout.

JK: Everything was rationed. Rice and everything, you have to have a coupon to go and get. Those days, everything was rationed, gas, food, all was rationed. You had to have a ticket even for cigarettes, liquor. So if you owned a store you were lucky because you could have all those things. But for civilian, everything was limited. You had to really look after your ration.

HY: Did you have any sense of the productivity level during the war? Did it change for the plantation? I know you're pretty young, but . . .

JK: Everybody was more inclined to think about the war, so I think they worked harder to make sure. But for our type of work, it was basically how you feel and how much you

want to make. Basically, we set a goal, how many lines we have to make to meet that goal. There were about six of us in a group. What we did was say, "Okay, today we're going to hit two dollars today." So we work, work, work until we hit the quota. Then, after that, we don't do anything else. We tell the boss we don't want to go overboard, so we're going to stop right here. We'd be resting until the others catch up. So when you work, you work right through as fast as you can, and then after lunch most of the time we wouldn't do anything. We hit our quota. The reason we did that was because whenever everybody's quota was high, when you come back the next day they cut [the rate of pay]. So maybe they gave us ten cents a line and everybody work so much, everybody hitting the two dollar [quota], and they would cut it and say, "Five cents a line." They kind of go up and down, so we have to watch.

We know how some people work. They're out there just so they can get out of school on Friday, so they just do the minimum, so if they make one dollar they're satisfied. You find that within the range, mostly on the average, people were making about dollar quarter, although three of us used to make higher. We really go out and do whatever we can. During the wartime like that, people's attitude changed and more became patriotic.

HY: Do you remember how you felt about some of the community members being taken away or interned, some of the Japanese leaders and ministers?

JK: You kind of felt sorry, wonder why they were taken. We couldn't understand because they were like anybody else, but it just happened that maybe the position they held and because they were the leaders of the community, they were the ones most likely [to be interned]. Or they just so happened to go to Japan and come back. So now, all these people who just came back [to Hawai'i right before the war started] were the ones who were interned at a concentration camp. We were really surprised at some of the people they selected. And most of them were Buddhist ministers, or businessmen who went to Japan.

HY: What about your parents? Do you remember them expressing any attitudes because their ties to Japan were a little closer, I assume.

JK: No, you see my parents—we told my parents, "What do you folks think about that? You want to go back to Japan?"

They said, "No. My family is all born and raised in Hawai'i, so we don't care to go back to Japan. I'm going to live here and die here." So they didn't care to go back to Japan, so they just stayed right here. In fact, my mom went a couple times before the war, but my dad said, "No, I'm not going back, my family is here." So finally in '70 I took them to Japan to see what it was like. They hadn't been, so they found that it was different, not what they had seen before. Everything had changed.

HY: They were from Hiroshima, right?

JK: Hiroshima. Everything was really changed, and basically all our family was living in Hawai'i. This is the place for them. You find a lot of Japanese people felt they didn't want to go. After the war, many of these families, the Japanese families had dual citizenship, so many of them cut their ties with their family. I had dual citizenship and I didn't know. Because when you born here, you automatically register. My father was a Japan citizen, so he registered us. As soon as the war was over, they all cut all the ties to Japan. A lot of them too, because they went to Japan just before the war for educational

purposes and they were stuck [in Japan when the war started], had a hard time coming back [to Hawai'i]. My sister folks who did go to Japan to study, came back before the war, so they were lucky.

HY: Before I forget, let me ask you about your name, Jiggs, how you got your name. That was not your birth name.

JK: In the old days, we all got the Japanese name. Mine is Kazukiyo, which is hard to pronounce and everything. Then one day I went to this party and I was playing with the older boys. The older boys didn't know who I was but I had this sweatshirt with a picture of Mr. Jiggs, and they looked at this picture and started calling me Jiggs. They pointed to me and the picture that I had said Mr. Jiggs, so everybody from that time on started calling me Jiggs. I got that nickname when I was about six years old and it stuck with me until today. If you ask people about Kazukiyo they don't know. You tell them about Jiggs, they know me by Jiggs. Even all through school and everything, they know me by Jiggs and nothing else.

HY: That was a comic strip?

JK: Comic strip. They used to have a comic strip, Jiggs and Maggie, so that's how. I know a friend of mine they used to call him Big Feet because he had huge feet. Now, this one guy got a name Durham bag. He got that name because his dad used to smoke that and he had the empty container, and just for the heck of it he brought this with him and we were going to swim in the gulch. Instead of going naked or anything like that he brought this (chuckles) and he covered [his genitals with the bag]. And from then on they started calling him Durham bag. Names like that were given because of something different. There were some they used to call Cowboy because at one time the cowboy boots used to be popular.

HY: You're talking about wearing cowboy boots as a kid?

JK: Yeah, because people didn't buy those things. I don't know what year it was popular, but my friend bought and he used to go to school like that. He was so proud and everything, so people start calling him Cowboy and the name stuck with him.

HY: Did most of you go barefoot?

JK: Most of us went barefoot. The school policy was that you had to wear shoes on campus. I took carpentry, so first thing in the morning I went straight to the carpentry shop, went to my locker and took out my shoes. I wore my shoes and walked around. Then I put my shoes in the locker and barefoot walked home. Many people today, wear high-heel shoes and then go home barefoot. The funny part is, those days we never did wear slipper that much. After the war, I guess from then on, people started using it. But rubber slipper wasn't [worn] that early. So either you wear shoes or go barefoot. Most of us went barefoot, because it was the most convenient thing, and easiest. All we did was go to school, go by the pipe, wash your leg, put on shoes, go to class. It was really different because everything we did was completely different from today.

HY: Now, did I hear you say that you went swimming in the ditches?

JK: Yeah.

HY: These are the irrigation ditches.



JK: Irrigation ditches. If you went above the camp, they had large irrigation ditches. We used to swim in that. Below there you have what we called "blind mullet" floating around. So, we didn't swim in that area. Lahainaluna now, right below Lahainaluna there's ditches. Also, we used to ride the flume. You know the flume? They used to have flume where they put the sugarcane, way up—beyond Lahainaluna now. From the irrigation they let the water out into this flume, and then you *wen* ride down. So when they throw the cane into the flume, we used to get to a certain area and then when the cane came down, we used to jump on the bunch of cane and ride that cane all the way down. And some people were too slow getting off, so they have to put the gate down to stop, because if not, it's going right into the cart where they load the cane. So, they were careful. I'm glad somebody was watching the gate usually. Because as soon as you came down, then you jump off. Some people want to get off and they get scared and they freeze.

(Laughter)

JK: Then the brake man would see you coming down, and drop [the gate] down, everything stop, you get off. But a person like that will never ride it again. They're too slow and they know it's dangerous. That was fun.

We used to shoot a lot of these birds, doves, the big doves, and we used to eat those birds. Like today, nobody eats those birds. We used to go out hunting. We used to eat the birds, it was really good. When I see around my place, the doves coming around, I look at it and start thinking, oh yeah, we used to kill the doves and have a good dinner.

HY: What about holidays? Were there special days that you folks celebrated?

JK: It depends on what holiday. Christmas, New Year's [Day], they really celebrate, and also Thanksgiving [Day]. When it comes to Fourth of July or others, it's not [celebrated]. When it came New Year's, they used to celebrate by making different kind of foods. And they have it ready so you can come in and everybody can come in and eat. What we used to do was, one of us says, "Okay, we'll start from my house, then we'll go to your house." So everybody went from house to house, and by the time you came to the end you couldn't eat. So we had to space ourselves so that when we eat—okay, this house is noted for raising rabbit. So we say, "Okay this house we go for rabbit." And this house, maybe they do roast pork, the way they cook it is really good, so we go over there. Each one was specialized. We go to the next house, hey, pretty soon come to the end, you so full and everything. So we say, "Hey, next year we better take it easy." That's one of the highlights.

Another thing when it came to New Year's, a lot of places about three or four days before New Year's, they used to pound their own *mochi*. So we had *mochi* where we can pound our own. We had the stick, we had everything. So people used to come to my house. Each one will say how many pounds [they want]. You start from early in the morning until maybe two, three o'clock. You just keep on going right through until you get everything done. But the *mochi* was good. Today I notice that when you buy the *mochi*, if you don't freeze it, it gets moldy real fast. Whereas the olden days when we used to pound, we used to leave it outside and it doesn't get moldy. But somehow today—I don't know if it's the rice or what it is. We used to have fun pounding *mochi*. So everybody, different families, like our area the people used to pound. The hardest part is when you pound for maybe about two or three hours, then you can start feeling [tired]. The old people, if they don't have children they don't have any help, so we have to do all the pounding for them. It was fun.

HY: Let me ask you if you remember your supervisors when you first started working as a victory worker and picking *kiawe* beans. Do you remember?

JK: Yeah, but many of them passed away. In carpentry we had Seichi Fujiwara, Masato "Mac" Yamauchi, and then some of the workers, older people.

HY: The workers that you were with, were they all young guys then?

JK: Yeah, we had a younger group. Many of them, after a while, things start slowing down so some of them left and went to the Mainland. Few stayed back, like in my case, I went back to school. Quite a few, I would say 50 percent went to California. I think maybe about 25 percent went back to school, and 25 percent stayed back.

HY: You mean stayed in the plantation.

JK: Yeah, they didn't move.

HY: I wanted to ask you about your schooling again. You were interested in carpentry, but were there other subjects that you were interested in or was that primarily what you were focused on?

JK: I was focusing more on what I needed in carpentry. When I was in high school, I always wanted to take chemistry. I had an instructor [and I told him], "I want to take up chemistry."

"A carpenter don't need to know chemistry."

I said, "No, I want to find out. There's a lot of stuff—chemistry might help me in carpentry."

He told me, "No, no. It's not going to help." It turns out, I couldn't take. Then afterwards when I went to college, I had to take chemistry, and then I found out there's a lot of things and it's all connected together and everything. If I was to take math he'd approve. So I took up algebra. Then I took up . . . I think it was (geometry). Anyway, with math he approved, but not anything else. But the instructor as a whole—he was working in the woodworking section at Pearl Harbor, and they didn't have enough teachers, so he came to teach at Lahainaluna. So he didn't have any degree or anything, but he was a pretty good instructor.

HY: Do you remember his name?

JK: Ernest Brunozzi. And the wife used to teach English, while he taught carpentry. He came from the old school in Italy. He took his apprenticeship training in Italy, so he was pretty good. As a furniture maker, he was really good. The school itself, the teachers that we had in the shop area, were all people from the industry, so it was good. My teacher, Brunozzi was working Pearl Harbor, and then after the war he start teaching Lahainaluna.

HY: You mentioned a little bit about how young kids were disciplined in those days, was maybe harsher by today's standards.

JK: Yeah. When you talk about discipline, when we were in elementary or high school, student had no choice, the teachers can do what they want. I know one teacher, this was a math teacher, and he told you to close your fingers like this, fingernails together, and he'd



get the yard stick and hit you on it. Like in my case, he always used to tell me, "I'm going to tell your brother." And when he tells me that, I better behave. And if they were to tell your parents, then the parents used to give you lickens. So, that's how it was. Today if you touch a student, you get a [law]suit. But those days, they were strict. The discipline was so strict that you were bound to listen. If today's standards [were applied], I think all those who teach in those old days would get fired. Everything that we did was so strict, and I think it's good. I think today, because it's so lax and everything, the parents themselves are like that, so what do you expect? The students, they don't study, or they don't do anything, and they blame the teachers, but it's not the teachers' fault, I think it's the parents' fault. The kids don't study, they don't care about anything.

HY: What other kinds of school activities were you involved in? You mentioned sports.

JK: The school activities, like in Lahainaluna basically, the social aspect was the dance. Each class had their own dance. Like the freshman had their own freshman dance, sophomore, junior, and senior. Another thing that kind of coincided with the social activities, they had the Maui County Fair. The plantation or the cannery used to loan us truck, they used to get the truck and the driver, and they put benches right across in the truck so you can sit. They used to have side gate, put the benches on. The county fair, one day—I think it was on a Friday—they round up all the kids, and they go to the county fair and the highlight was the football game. It's always Lahainaluna against Maui High School. For Lahaina people, Lahainaluna playing, so everybody there. It was one of those things that everybody looked forward to. It was part of the Maui County Fair, so everybody all out. Outside from that, nothing much, unless you make your own fun. We have to plan our own. If you want a beach party or anything, we plan our own. People get together and say, "Hey let's have a beach party."

HY: Would those kind of parties be family oriented or would it just be your peers?

JK: Just peers. We just get together and say, "Okay, let's have one." You bring this, you bring that. Get the hibachi, and get everything all set up. It was all clean fun. This is why I say, we made the beach party because this way you can meet together, but there's no such thing as you go on your own. Everybody stayed as a group.

HY: Like group dating as opposed to couple dating.

JK: Couple dating, yeah. We make it so it's sort of like unknown, (chuckles) everything all hidden. The way we grew up was completely different from today. Whenever you went home with a girl in our time, it was just like you were going to get married to her. Today, you just go home with a girl, it doesn't mean anything, it's just a friend. But our days when you went home with a girl, it means time to settle down. You hardly went to the girl's home, unless there's a birthday party or something like that or you're invited, but then you have all the friends coming.

HY: Yeah, very different. This is maybe a good time, we're at the end of the second tape so I'll stop this.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 39-3-2-02

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Jiggs Kuboyama (JK)

Honolulu, O'ahu

July 11, 2002

BY: Holly Yamada (HY)

HY: This is the second session with Jiggs Kuboyama. It's July 11, 2002.

I think I want to ask you about something you talked about last time when you talked about working as a victory worker and picking *kiawe* for cattle feed. Was the cattle for the plantation purposes?

JK: Plantation, yeah.

HY: They didn't market any of it?

JK: No, they did market it.

HY: Oh they did.

JK: They sold the milk, and they used to supply the school with the milk. Those days, they used to have milk, different flavors—chocolate, strawberry, and then the regular white milk.

HY: What about things like health care? I know the plantation provided health care for you folks.

JK: As far as health was concerned, everybody went to the hospital that the plantation used to run. So it was similar to right now, the Kaiser plan. You would report and give your name, and they take you and send you to see any doctor. There's no one doctor that you go to. Whoever is available, you take. They check you and find out what's wrong, and then prescribe medication or whether you need an operation or anything. They diagnose you and then do whatever is necessary.

HY: What about medications? Were they also provided for you?

JK: They also provided medications. They had their own pharmacy. They gave you the prescription, you go over to the drug department and they'll give you the prescription.

HY: So all that was taken care of.

JK: All taken care of by the plantation; you didn't have to pay anything. We didn't have HMSA [Hawai'i Medical Service Association] or anything, so the plantation took care of

everything. Until later, when they start changing, when they start unionizing, then what happened was that under contract, they give different things. I think that's when Kaiser and others came into the picture.

HY: Maybe this is a good time to talk about unionization, I know you had mentioned the strike of '46 and maybe you could talk about how people felt about the union coming in, if you remember.

JK: Maybe I might have seen it different. The union moving in, I thought it was a great move. I'll have to give the union credit because when they started to organize the plantation, they selected people as union leaders that were respected in that plantation. So, it was pretty easy for them to have the people accept unionization. Until then, maybe they had some other people that wasn't influential, it was pretty hard. But then, as we got the better people in, they start talking to people. And the people, they respected within the community. And, I guess, if I'm not mistaken was '46 that they had the first strike.

HY: The big strike. That was a statewide strike, yeah?

JK: I think, that time too, it did help. See, the thing about it was, for many of us, we found whatever the union wanted, we went along with.

HY: Do you remember if there was real animosity towards management?

JK: What the union tried to do was try to work things out whenever they can to be favorable for the working people. When unionism came in, from then on, they went into politics. I think that's when the Democratic party in Hawai'i came up through the union.

While we're talking about politics, see in the olden days the Republican party had the money. They used to have rallies, and they'll meet at the school grounds, like Kamehameha III school grounds, and they'll set up the stage, and people come down. They'll have music and everything. To attract people, they used to have food (chuckles) some kind of food. So naturally they'd have the whole town coming out. I guess people just went along, they figure these people are all right because they always bring food, so we have to support them. I guess that really helped the Republican party right through.

HY: Were you ever instructed or encouraged to vote a certain way by the plantation?

JK: They would support the Republican candidate. You just went there. The names were so familiar because they've been re-elected so many times and they take it for granted that we have to put them in office. People didn't know any better. They didn't worry about politics because they just left it up to [the plantation]. And the thing that made people aware, was when the Democrats started coming into power and they start going out through the union. At that time in Lahaina the ILWU [International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union] went around getting the Democrats involved in it. Then, elected. So, I remember that at times we didn't know much about it, but we used to hold signs or do things. We still went to the Republican gathering because they always had food. And when you're young, "Hey, there's food, let's go." I guess, from that time on, the people began to—"Oh, who is this person?" and "What do they do for the people?" And gradually people start realizing that they better get into politics. But until then, they just left it up to the people who ran year after year. It was fun because they always had entertainment and a lot of food. We always looked forward to the Republican rally; they always had something good.

- HY: My understanding is that low wages were the main point of contention during the strike. Do you remember what some of the issues were? I know you were pretty young, you were still in high school, yeah?
- JK: Yeah, I was still in high school. There were a lot of things that they [i.e. the union negotiators] tried to get for the people. And in that sense, what they got were some of the things that the plantation used to give for free. Now it had changed because of the contract. With the increase in wages, what happened was that later on, you had to pay rent. The house was free before the strike, but after strike, when they start negotiating, "We want this, we want that." Then gradually, the housing you have to pay rent. [Previously, the plantation would] have somebody do the renovations. If you have to do repairs, they'd do repairs. There would be no fee. Gradually, we have to pay rent, and then eventually, the plantation started to sell all the homes. They started improving things, and then sold all the plantation to whoever wanted to buy. In places where it wasn't feasible, they developed different areas that people could buy. A lot of things we lost out, like recreation. The plantation used to hire somebody that took care all the recreation. That went out of the window. So now they had to start organizing because the plantation gave up some of the things that they used to do for free. They were eliminated, like sports. They found that because there wasn't any kind of organized sports, the younger generation got into trouble. We used to have problems, so after a while many of the active union people decided that we better do something for our kids. They found that sports is one way to keep the kids busy so they started to form what they called the West Maui Athletic Association. Since the plantation gave up handling all the athletic programs, this association organized and got people from each camp, got together and discussed what to do. The West Maui Athletic Association started and we started having competition again. Where the plantation left off, we carry on from there.
- HY: Do you remember what year that athletic organization was formed?
- JK: I think it was formed in about '46 or '47.
- HY: So, after the strike.
- JK: Yes, after the strike—maybe '47 or so. It continued on for a while. The city and county and others had different leagues and so forth, so I guess they just eliminated it. Until that time, it really helped. I wasn't in Lahaina then, so I don't know when they terminated the West Maui Athletic Association. At the beginning, it was good because the older people used to (teach the younger ones). At least the plantation left it there so that people were able to use, which was really nice.
- HY: Do you remember any shortages? Do you remember any sort of hardships during the strike?
- JK: Well, it was the first time, so I guess many of the people survived because many of the people on strike knew that people needed food. What they did was, the people who were good in fishing, used to go out and catch as much fish as they can. And they'll come around different camps and they sell the fish. They used to sell it so reasonable that you couldn't believe. Like selling you *akule* or different type of fish. If they caught a lot, sometimes it would be five cents a pound because they knew people needed. When they caught a big school, they used to come around and sell ten cents a pound. We used to buy a lot and we used to dry it. And people used to raise their own vegetables, and they'd start sharing.

- HY: Do you remember going without anything during the strike or was it pretty much taken care of through the union?
- JK: The plantation store was still doing business, so you could go down and charge [for merchandise]. Go down to the store and say, "I want this and this." At the end of the month, they send you the bill. They continued that. The union I guess, they tried their best to do what they could. But mostly you had to provide your own.
- HY: Do you remember who some of the prominent leaders were in the plantation?
- JK: For Lahaina, Uchimura comes to my mind. He was more like, what you call maybe business agent for the union in the Lahaina area. There were others who were active helpers like Masato Yamauchi, and you have Isao Agawa. Then also, Shige Wakida. There were others I can't recall that really helped out to organize the Lahaina ILWU.
- HY: I had read something about there was an incident when some of the supervisors were beaten up and then there was a trial about that.
- JK: The thing about it was, I guess this was well planned. I think the union people went over made some kind of ruckus on one end of Lahaina. While the police came over to straighten that out, they beat the supervisors on the other end.
- HY: So that was a distraction, you mean? Oh.
- JK: That's what I think went down because there were two things going on at the same time. So, I guess they must've done something, but I'm not too sure about that. Just saying that those things happened and we thought, "Well pretty good." At that time too, we had the manager's wife teaching at Lahainaluna.
- HY: Mrs. [Gertrude] Moir?
- JK: Yeah. The thing about it was she was more pro-plantation because she's the manager's wife. I think she got in trouble one time because, after the bidding of the supervisors, she made a comment that it's really bad the union is setting an example for the future—talking about us—and they shouldn't do those kinds of things. I guess she was told not to say anything about the strike, but because that happened, she just brought it up. And I guess, some people reported to the union [that she said that] the parents are setting a bad example for the kids. I guess some of them didn't like that remark, so they reported that. And then the union talked to the principal, [saying] that she shouldn't say those things even though she's the manager's wife, more so. If it was maybe another teacher it wouldn't be so bad. They told her, you should be more selective about what you say because it does bother the union, the parents in the union. I recall she had scolding from the principal.
- HY: After the strike—there was some animosity stirred up during the strike—afterwards, as best as you can remember, how was the relationship between management and plantation worker then?
- JK: Well, after the strike, somehow people began to feel that more or less, sometimes the supervisors can't help it because they have to do what the plantation tells them to do. And he's your friend, so what you going to do? You've been friends for so long and it just happens that he was promoted to supervisor position. I think many of them forgave. I guess in that sense, in Lahaina, I don't think it was that bad. In no time, people started to work together.



HY: You talked a little bit about social life. I'm wondering if different ethnic groups socialized with each other.

JK: At that time, as we grew up, there wasn't any barrier. He was my friend and we played together. We go his house and then we'll eat, and we'll come over to my house. We had a lot of Japanese and the other nationalities, even New Year's time, the other nationalities would come out. They knew the Japanese [celebrate New Year's]. They used to come out. Most of them, we played ball together. We were all buddies and we do things together. In the olden days too, the other nationalities like the Hawaiians or the Portuguese or whoever, music used to be one of the things that everybody liked to do. Where we stayed, right below where the Agena family used to live, they had a stone wall. We came in the evening with our guitars, *'ukuleles*, and we sat down on the stone wall and played music. And also, we were fortunate because (Clarence) "Bright Eyes" Agena used to be in our camp, so we were lucky. He was a terrific dancer. He used to hold dance classes. We learned from him, like those days, the foxtrot, waltz, and all this stuff. He used to be the instructor and he helped us out. We were fortunate that we had somebody to help us out. And we had other older people that when it came to sports, they'd come and help us out. If a certain sport we didn't have anybody to help us out, and we wanted to have a team, somebody would put one of the player's names as coach (chuckles) and we just would have a team. We had a lot of fun.

All in all, it depends on your camp, where you have people who are old enough to help out. Another thing about music, today when you learn *'ukulele*, you learn the proper way, especially the keys. So when you play, a C is a C. And then, maybe you play F7 or whatever. What we used to do was, C they called it C, F7 they might say second C; or F, second F; B, B flat. So if you start getting formal training and you start taking classes, you figure what is this? I learned it as second C. But you hold it the same way. That's the thing that was interesting, because the way we learned just on the stone wall, you get the *'ukulele* out and you just follow the other person, the one who knows. And whatever keys they played, you just played and followed along.

HY: Did you ever think that during those times that you would end up being a fairly well known *'ukulele* maker?

JK: I didn't think (chuckles) I'd ever make an *'ukulele*. If it wasn't for the students at Waianae High School, I don't think I ever would've thought about it. When they said let's try it, we did. From then on, once you get into it, you find that as you start teaching, people do make mistakes, then you have to find a method that eliminates that mistake. From the time I made my first *'ukulele* till now, there's so many changes it went through. Like, *'ukuleles* might have four, six, eight, and ten strings. One guy brought up the idea what about five strings? How are we going to set it up? And the reason we started to do things like that was because he said that the bottom three [strings] are mostly for picking but not the top one. What can we do and how can we arrange the key set-up? We decided, okay, let's work on it. Then it dawned on us, the five-string, what we'll do is put two strings on the top, and then the next three individual [strings]. I started thinking about why not make it sound like eight-string, because eight-string you have, two, two, two, all two. But what I noticed was that if you take from the A string, which is the bottom, A and the E, you see the two strings on the eighth string are similar. There's no difference, only the third one, which is the C string, you have two. One was thick and one was thin, so we said why not take the thick one? So then we used the two as it is on the eight, and then we strum it, it sounds good. So now, we started to make the five-string. We call it the mini eight.

Even a lot of the professional *'ukulele* makers are not making it, only one person on Maui makes the five-string. The others haven't gone into the five-string. I found out that more or less, 75 percent of the students I have prefer making the five-string rather than the eight-string. Because (it has less strings and it is easier to pick but yet it sounds like an eight-string uke).

HY: Well, just to go back to your plantation days and when you were a worker in high school, you kind of did utility. Were you part of an utility gang?

JK: We were working for the plantation while we were going to school. They had different, what you might say, gangs. Some went weeding, some went to pick up the sugarcane, or some did spray poison. Our gang was a group that more or less was helping the dairy. Sometimes they'd select so many workers, and they'd send them down to the main dairy plant. While the others might go and cut the *koa* so that it'll be shorter for the cow, and then others did something else. I was fortunate that I was sent to the Honokōwai dairy. I used to work there and help out whenever I can. One thing good about that place, if you work for them, you can drink all the milk you want. That's why we liked that place. But what we also found out, don't drink too much milk (laughs). Because the first time we were there, we figure, wow. Chocolate milk, all you want, strawberry milk, all you want. We thought, this is it. We drank a lot, but then after that, oh boy, we stopped.

HY: At some point you learned welding.

JK: Yeah. After I got out of high school, I applied to work for the plantation. The carpentry shop didn't have any opening but they did have one for utility gang. So I applied for the job, and then I was fortunate to get the job. I started working as a welder's helper. We used to do all the odd jobs wherever welding was needed. They had this huge pump that used to pump the water up into the higher area. After they wash the cane, then the water that they used came down the ditch to a certain area. They had a huge pump that pumped that up to the (pond up on the) hill again. And then, once they get it up there, the water is used so that it comes down again. It's all gravity flow, but they made this pump to pump it up there. Sometimes, within the pump, there might be some places that got worn out so these welders go in. We would take off the cover and check inside. Wherever had to be welded, the welders used to weld. And our job was to see that we helped take care the welders. So make sure the supply, everything—so we did that. At times when slow, they used to send us down where the mill was. They had another welding shop where they did all the welding for the mills. The (new trainees) that just came in didn't know about welding, so they kept them there and then taught how to weld.

HY: Do you remember who you were apprenticed with?

JK: At that time, another classmate of mine, Yoshikazu Yoshino, he and I got the same job together. He lived in Kuhua Camp, which was below our place. Every morning, I walked down, dropped over to his house, and then he and I would go to work together. Then after, maybe six months, he decided that he was going to quit. Then he went into the military service. From that time on, I was only by myself working there. It was really interesting. We got to go all over the place.

In the olden days, Kā'anapali, where (Sheraton is), there used to be a small wharf, and the oil that the plantation used, they used to pump it from there. The tank would be outside and they used to have pipes coming in, and they hooked up. They used to have a lot of these containers on the top where they pump it up. So, my job, since I was the youngest of



that group, was watching the hose for any leak or (any problem). If there was leak, I would notify the people on the barge that it's leaking, so stop pumping.

I had a good foreman, (Tokuichi) Kodama. He used to be kind of like the foreman. In the morning he'd pick me up and take me down, and I had my lunch [with me]. I didn't bring anything for the dinner, so he'd go home and then prepare food and he'd bring it down for me for dinner. I'd stay right through and then maybe work until twelve o'clock at night, midnight, and he'd take me home. And then after that, next day, I'd report to work again.

HY: Were you paid hourly?

JK: Hourly, yeah.

HY: Did they have overtime?

JK: Yeah, any time after eight hours was time and a half. So I used to enjoy that time and a half. Just watching the pipes, you know.

HY: Who was the oil supplier? Was that also plantation owned? Where did the oil come from?

JK: That came from Honolulu, they order crude oil. What they do is, the mill used for the heating system and everything, so they used to have the crude oil. Sometimes, I don't know if other companies buy from the plantation or not, but they used to bring it in.

HY: How long did you continue with your position there as a welder?

JK: I worked about a year and a half. Then, after that there was opening in the carpentry so I went in and I got in. I really enjoyed being a carpenter. Then, after I got into the carpenter program, I worked for a while, a couple years. Not a couple years, maybe about a year and a half. Then, I was called. The first letter I had from the President of the United States. The personal letter congratulating me (chuckles): You are hereby to go for your physical examination. Then after that, I got inducted into the army, (served during the) Korean War.

HY: Can you talk a little bit more what you did as a carpenter for the plantation?

JK: What we did was, all these plantation homes, they'll request to have certain things done. So if it was a big job, then the whole gang goes over there and does the repair work. If there was some job that wasn't too great, they'd send one or two people. One job I had, they were trying to renovate all the kitchens. So we had to change all the kitchen countertop and the cabinets below that, just another person and myself went over and started working. They'd leave the material at each house.

HY: So did you work on any and all of the buildings including managers' homes and plantation homes? Did you work on everything?

JK: Yeah. Wherever the work was, I was available. So, one time, they sent me down by myself to go to the manager's home to check all the screens. Every one I checked had to be repaired, so I fixed them up. So what they normally do, the foreman would come and tell me, "Okay, get your toolbox and then I'm going to take you." Then he'd take me down and then he'd have the screen and all the supplies there. He'd tell me, "Okay this is what you have to do." Then, he'd leave me and tell me maybe certain time he'd come back to

pick me up. So you do your work by the time he comes back. Most likely, he'd figure out how long it's going to take. By the time he comes, you finished already.

HY: Did all your training come from your vocational training in high school or did they train you?

JK: That did help to some extent. The other was, when people needed some renovation, or when people were building houses, I went to help on my own because I wanted to learn, so I just volunteered. I asked them, "You fixing up your place?" So I'd come down and help. At times, churches like that, need some repair. I was lucky because my dad used to be a contractor, so in fixing things what I didn't know, I'd ask him, "I have this situation over here, what should I do?" Then, he'd know more or less what can be done. He'd explain to me what I should do, and then I used to go down to the church and I'd do the repair work. So I was, in a way, fortunate that I had a dad who was able to show me all those things so I picked up faster.

Many times, they send me out [on a job], even though my grade was low. See, you went in at [an entry level called] grade three, I think, then you work so many months, grade four, and then grade five. When I was grade five already, I used to do work by myself.

HY: Many levels were there, how many grades?

JK: Up to ten, this is leading man, just like foreman.

HY: Was it based on your level of skill and supervisory [duties]?

JK: Yeah, level of skill and supervisor will recommend. Because they can have only so many who are grade seven, which is more like second class. They can only have so many grade nines, which is the journeyman. They keep you down, so wherever you start, you can go up to the fifth level. Then the fifth level after that, if there's an opening or they want to promote you, then you have to wait to get up. Before I got to be a journeyman, I was inducted.

HY: Were you still living in the family home?

JK: Yeah, I was living there.

HY: Just before we leave the plantation, do you have a sense of what attitudes were towards the manager while you were there? It was [John] Moir, yeah?

JK: Yeah.

HY: Was he regarded favorably by workers or do you have a sense of that?

JK: As far as Moir is concerned, I guess they felt that he was all right. Sometime when you change managers, at times it could be worse. People felt that they could live with him. It might be easier rather than having somebody come in who might be worse than him. When I was there, he was still manager. After I came back, I think he still was there. After we got inducted, then I stayed for almost two years in the service. I came home, then I went back to work for the plantation, and they gave me the same job back.

HY: You came back again as a carpenter?

JK: Yeah, I was a carpenter. I worked until—I was discharged in May. So, I worked until August, then I went back to school. Thinking back, those who went into the service, WW II, came back and what they used to say, “Oh, I wish I went back to school.” Many of them took advantage of the GI Bill [of Rights], so when I got out, since I had my GI Bill, I figured why don’t I go back to school and try. If I make it, I make it. If I don’t, at least I can say I tried and I won’t regret it.

HY: Where were you stationed during the Korean War?

JK: I was stationed in Japan. In a sense I was fortunate because when I got to Japan, I think there were about three hundred people from Hawai‘i that went on the same trip with others from the Mainland. When we got there, we went home to the relocation. They line you up and start calling names. “Okay, you sir.” Everybody whose name was called, they just step forward. “Okay, now all of you called, get all your things ready because tomorrow we’re shipping you, you catch this train and go to Korea.” Then those who are left back, he said, “Now all of you who are leftover, we’re going to send you to training school in Itajima,” which was close to Hiroshima. Then he start calling names again, “You, you, you, you go to radio. You, you, you going to business.” And they called my name and they said, “You going to Singapore, pole lining.” Telephone poles, you going to that type. So they sent me to school in Itajima for four weeks. We had a class of sixty. Then from the class of sixty, they took thirty. They call up your name again, and they say, “Okay, you folks are going to Korea, assigned to this outfit. The rest of you going to Sendai. You’re going to start forming these new signal battalions.” So I was up in Sendai for two years. We did our training up there, and we were just about ready to go to Korea, when my time was up. Since I was a draftee, I served only two years. My time was up so they told me you can leave.

HY: We’re at the end of this side. I’ll turn it over.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

HY: So, then you came back to Hawai‘i.

JK: As soon as I got back I applied for my old job back and then I started working. In the meantime, one of the teachers I had, Mrs. [Mildred] Bowen, I went to talk to her, “I’m thinking about going back to school.” And at that time, the people who ran the vocational school program, the supervisors at the D.O.E. [Department of Education], were graduates of Stout [Institute]. So when people talk about what school to go, they always talk about Stout Institute. So in the meantime, while I was waiting to get confirmation whether I was accepted or not, I was working for the plantation. She was the one who saw to it that I was accepted. So, when I was accepted I start preparing.

HY: So in the two years that you were gone, did you notice—what was your perspective then coming back to the plantation?

JK: It didn’t change that much, because most of the people that I went in with, most of them were in the service also. So basically, they had older people [who still worked in the plantation]. At that time, things were really slow so they didn’t mind. As many of the people who served in the Korean War started coming back, the gang [of plantation

workers] started getting bigger and bigger. Many of those who're working, decided that not much job [opportunities], so they're going to look elsewhere. Many of them went to California seeking jobs. All over Lahaina was kind of slow. I got out [of the army] in 1953.

There was a group, kind of a large group, from Lahaina that went to, I think, San Jose to raise strawberries. I think somebody came down and talked to them about how wonderful it is to raise strawberries. At that time, I don't know how many families just picked up everything and they left. They went to San Jose to raise strawberries. But then, they found out that it's not that easy. So many of them, from there, moved to LA to do different kind of work.

HY: So you were only back at Pioneer Mill for about a year? Less than a year?

JK: Less than a year, only a couple months.

HY: On a GI Bill then, went to Stout. What was your adjustment like, if there was an adjustment?

JK: Quite a bit because I hadn't gone to school or anything for a while. I was fortunate because some people when they take a nap, they can't take a short nap. When they sleep, they sleep two or three hours, but for myself, I set the alarm for one hour and I can just get up when the alarm rings. I used to form a habit that whenever I finished with my class, before I do anything, I take a one hour nap so I'll be fresh.

HY: What about peoples' attitudes towards you as a Japanese guy from Hawai'i?

JK: In Wisconsin I didn't feel too much discriminated [against] because all the students who look at us, they look at us as a Hawaiian because we came from Hawai'i. It's not like we were Japanese or anything, they take us as Hawaiian. This is why, in a sense, it was really good because they didn't look at you and say, "Eh, you Japanese." You Hawaiian, you from Hawai'i, so that's how they accept you. In a sense, it was really nice, the people were warm. Students didn't hesitate, you get to know them, they want to take you home for the weekend. For them, it was a novelty, "Eh, I have a friend from Hawai'i. I'll bring him home." If you want, every weekend you can go home with somebody. But at the beginning we kind of hesitated.

HY: Were there other people from Hawai'i that went to Stout that you knew?

JK: Yeah, we have quite a few people. Actually, I think we had maybe a dozen that went to Stout.

HY: Was there anybody from Pioneer Mill or just yourself?

JK: (Yes, there were four of us.) The interesting part was that when I first got to Stout, I was walking around the campus, and who do I see but one of my classmates, David Pedro, (who was a boarder at Lahainaluna). He went to Stout for about two years and he went into the service, and fought in the Korean War. After he got through, he went back to school under the GI Bill. He worked for his bachelor's and master's. Richard Kadotani, Fred Kajihara, and Myrtle Tamura attended Stout while I was there.

HY: How long a program was it?

JK: It was a four-year program.

HY: So did you stay on the Mainland for four years or did you come back in between?

JK: No, I stayed four years. During the summer months I worked on the Mainland at different kind of jobs. After my freshman year, I worked at Hennipen County Home for Boys. I worked the whole summer as camping and handicraft director. The following summer I worked in Madison, Wisconsin as an auto mechanic. After my junior year, the dean of instruction wanted to build his home, so the carpentry instructor (asked me to give him a hand. It was a good experience because I learned the Mainland style construction which uses double-wall construction and insulation material. In Hawai'i we used single-wall construction.)

HY: Did you always know you wanted to come back to Hawai'i?

JK: After going through four years of winter, then you decide that Hawai'i is the best place.

HY: And so you came back and started teaching at Waianae High School.

JK: Yes. Waianae opened up just that year, so I'm a charter member of Waianae High School.

HY: This must have been in '57.

JK: Yes. And then, I went to Kalani High School, (which had just opened the year before).

HY: You mentioned already your interest in 'ukulele making began at Waianae High School.

JK: I continued 'ukulele making at Kalani.

HY: Was that at the request of some of the students?

JK: Yes. They saw what I did at Waianae, "Eh, I want to try." So I starting improving on it. Each year, they have an industrial arts craftsmens' fair. We try to display what the students have done in the intermediate and high school. When I brought the 'ukuleles that my students made, the judges said, "What you folks did? Fix this 'ukulele or what?"

I said, "No, no, no, no."

"Refinish?"

"No, made from scratch."

They say, "What do you mean from scratch? It cannot be." They didn't believe, so I had to go back to Kalani High School for the form that I used, the mold and the gigs, and showed the judges. They didn't realize that the students could do that.

HY: Can you explain why your method of making is different that they didn't understand the mold [method] as opposed to . . .

JK: Those who make 'ukulele, what they do is, they make one half and then they apply heat to bend the shape for the 'ukulele. When you bend the shape, it holds its shape like that. Then you have two sides that you put together to make the 'ukulele. Mine [i.e. JK's method] is, the neck and the side-piece. The side-piece, instead of two sections, I make into one piece.



I make it so that I veneer the wood, sand it, and I can bend into a circle. So that is the thickness for that particular piece of wood. At times if the wood is soft, it'll be thicker than other wood. I make it into a circle, and then attach the neck to the side-piece, and then I put it in the mold. And I press the mold, so you have the shape of the 'ukulele. Then I put my bracing all inside and I put the top on. Because once I put the top on, then the shape is there already. Take it out from the mold I just rout that. Then it has the shape of the 'ukulele, then I turn it over and work on the side. Now, most of the 'ukulele makers, normally, when they put it together, assemble, they put the back first. So this is why, because they work on the back first, the back isn't going to have any humps. Mine is the reverse way, I put the front first and then turn it over and work on the back. So the backside, I can make it so that I have a specialty, that have a crown. The 'ukulele have a hump on the back. If I did it like the normal way, I would not be able to put the hump. So, I had to reverse mine. I don't use heat, all I do is maybe use hot water to make it easier to get in the mold. Basically, I don't want the student to apply heat or anything that can burn, so I had to find ways. The idea came to me because I used to do a lot of laminating projects where I had to make a mold to shape what I want. So that came to my mind. That's how my technique came. I used to do a lot of laminating projects, and this is why I say it's so simple that anybody can make it.

HY: Much less seams.

JK: Yes. The alignment and everything is simple. Everything worked out.

HY: After Kalani . . .

JK: After Kalani there was an opening for an apprenticeship coordinator. So with my background in industry, I applied for that apprenticeship coordinator position.

HY: This is at Honolulu.

JK: Yeah, used to be Honolulu Vocational School. When I moved, it was Honolulu Vocational School, then the following year they changed to Honolulu Community College. So, I can say I was in the old vocational school. I stayed with the vocational school for one year and then after that they changed to Honolulu Community College.

HY: And you continued your career there until you retired.

JK: Yeah, I stayed there until I retired. It was very interesting because our job was to work with the industry setting up the curriculum and then finding the instructors to teach the class and then we help the instructors learn how to teach class. It was really an interesting and challenging job. I really enjoyed that because even in high school I used to always encourage my students to go into some kind of trade. Many of them did go into it, and today, they're happy that they did go into it. I have some who became contractors. And that's the most satisfying when you see people stay in the trade and [advance]. Many of them became superintendents and are still working in the trade. That's the thing about teaching, when you see all these people, how they made themselves. They didn't have much, but at least, you see them grow and know what you did helped them too.

HY: Now, I understand to this day you're still teaching people, just on your own.

JK: Once you're in teaching, I guess you continue to do whatever you can. Whoever wants to learn. If I die, that's it, but whenever I can, I'll just help you.

I always told my students that I may teach you one way, you learn from the other person another way. What you do is, you think, which is the best way? When you look at somebody doing their demonstration, always think to yourself, if I were to do it, what would be the best way, faster, than the way he's making it? You try to improve what you learn. That's what industry wants, something you can do that can be fast. They're paying you so much.

I always tell the student that when the boss or foreman scolds you, don't feel bad because they feel like you have potential, so they scold you. A good example now, if you see your brother doing something wrong you try to correct him and scold him. Now, if it was somebody else's kid, you don't go scold them because it's not your business. You just leave it alone. Anybody who scold you, it's because they're interested in you. If not, they're not going to bother with you. See, in construction, if you are liked by the foreman, wherever he goes, he's going to take you with because he likes you. He's going to scold you, but you figure, he don't want you make a lot of mistakes, but he's going to take care of you. If people would really stop to think and analyze it, they'd find that it's so true because even from the time I started, I used to get scolding. I found that, when I get scolding feel thankful because he's interested in me.

HY: Is there anything else you want to add reflecting on your small kid time in Lahaina?

JK: When we went to school, in your freshman year you have an opportunity to think about what type of work you would like to get into. You still have time before your senior year so you can change [your mind]. You had vocational [courses] you had maybe business [courses], and now, you can have hotel [work classes] and college prep or whatever. So when they get to be seniors, then they kind of know more or less what they want. Today too many students when they graduate, they don't know what they want. Even if we try to help them out.

Another thing for me, I feel that is very important for counselors, they should teach those who are going to college—and I don't think that counselors stress enough—how to select classes to survive in college. And the only way you're going to survive in college is if you have an idea of what is your academic strong area and what is your weak area. So whenever you take classes, always take half the classes you're strong in and half that you're weak in. So when you have A in your strong area and C in your weak area, your average is still B. You always balance it so you have 3.0. That's how you should take classes, so that you don't flunk out. Too many people take the weak area, they take maybe fifteen credits, the next thing, they look all D's. But if you take half and half, guarantee you'll survive college. If not, I don't think anybody told you about that.

HY: No (chuckles). Okay, thank you very much. Anything else you want to add?

JK: No (chuckles).

HY: Okay, thank you so much.

END OF INTERVIEW



# **PIONEER MILL COMPANY:**

## **A Maui Sugar Plantation Legacy**

**Center for Oral History  
Social Science Research Institute  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa**

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